



*Beaufort County Comprehensive
Plan*

Introduction





Introduction

The purpose of the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan is to enable government officials and citizens to effectively manage natural, cultural, economic and fiscal resources in light of growth, change and an uncertain future. The policies in this document are aimed at promoting safe and healthy communities that preserve and build on the County's unique sense of place; and at promoting sustainable economic opportunities that allow all County residents to thrive and prosper. This Comprehensive Plan is a vital document because it contains guidance for the development of the County for the next 10 to 20 years. The Plan provides this guidance by outlining recommendations and implementing strategies which are supported by data and technical analysis, and developed through a public review process. This plan is a living document and in addition to a statutorily required 5-year review, will be continually monitored and updated to respond to changing conditions and data.

Building on Past Planning Efforts

This document builds on comprehensive and regional planning efforts conducted in the last 15 years. In addition to Beaufort County's first comprehensive plan adopted in 1997, the policies in this document build on the recommendations of the Northern and Southern Beaufort County Regional Plans. The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan (2006) focused on planning for the amount of growth anticipated over the next 20 years in Hilton Head Island, the Town of Bluffton, and the surrounding unincorporated areas of the county. The Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan (2007) represents an agreement between Beaufort County, the City of Beaufort and the Town of Port Royal as to how the northern county region will grow and develop. The plan establishes growth boundaries for municipalities, and includes a land use plan framework that focuses growth in and around the municipalities while preserving over 60% of the land area for rural uses.

Authority of Comprehensive Plans

Comprehensive Plans were mandated by the State of South Carolina in 1994 for all local governments who regulate land use. The Comprehensive Plan is not a detailed land development or zoning

ordinance, but rather a public policy document, adopted by ordinance, forming the legal basis for any future land use ordinances. In order for local land use regulations to be valid, they must be adopted in accordance with a locally adopted plan that is based upon and includes appropriate studies of the location and the extent of the present and anticipated population, social, economic and environmental resources, and the current issues and concerns of the community.

Plan Elements

Comprehensive Plans in South Carolina are required to have a minimum of nine elements – population and demographics, land use, natural resources, cultural resources, transportation, economic development, affordable housing, community facilities, and priority investment. In addition to these required nine elements, this document includes a history element that provides a backdrop to the current conditions discussed in the other chapters. The plan also includes an energy element that promotes sustainable practices regarding energy consumption.

History: This element provides a brief history of Beaufort County starting with the first Native American settlements to the present time. This chapter provides an historical backdrop to the Population and Demographics, Land Use and Cultural Resources Elements.

Population and Demographics: This element analyzes historic and current population and demographic trends and provides reasonable projections of future population growth to help guide policy decisions through the lifespan of this plan. Each of the following chapters of this plan utilize these projections to help shape their recommendations.

Land Use: This element provides an analysis of existing development patterns, recent planning and plan implementation efforts, and a vision for future land use and growth management policies. The policies in this chapter build on the recommendations of the 1997 Plan and on the recommendations of the Northern and Southern Beaufort County Regional Plans.

Natural Resources: Beaufort County has a unique natural beauty, made up of salt marsh vistas, sub-tropical maritime forests of live oaks and palmettos, forested wetlands of cypress and tupelo and over 30 miles of beaches. Beaufort County residents and visitors have a great attachment to these natural features. This element focuses on the protection, preservation, and management of Beaufort County’s natural resources in light of the pressures of growth.

Cultural Resources: This element focuses on preserving and enhancing the County’s cultural resources, which include historic sites and structures, scenic highways, maritime heritage, agricultural heritage,

“It is the function and duty of the local planning commission... to undertake a continuing planning program for the physical, social, and economic growth, development, and redevelopment of the area within its jurisdiction. The plans and programs must be designed to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity, or the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy of its area of jurisdiction. Specific planning elements must be based upon careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of existing conditions and probable future development and include recommended means of implementation.”

- South Carolina Local Government Planning Enabling Act of 1994.

the military, Gullah culture and the visual and performing arts community.

Economic Development: This element provides an analysis of the current economic condition and focuses on how to build on the county's existing assets while diversifying its economic base. The chapter promotes policies that encourage quality job creation that allow citizens to find reasons to remain or settle in Beaufort County in employment that requires knowledge, talent and training and compensates with higher-paying jobs.

Affordable Housing: This element analyzes the location, type, age, condition, tenure, and affordability of housing. This element includes an analysis of the regulatory environment to determine unnecessary barriers to the provision of affordable housing. The goal of this element is to maintain and enhance the diversity of Beaufort County by providing the opportunity for people of all income levels to live and work in the County.

Energy: This element focuses on how to lower Beaufort County's energy dependency by reducing local energy consumption and facilitating local renewable energy production. The element first assesses how to make local government facilities and operations more energy efficient; how to promote green technologies and energy efficiency in the private sector; how to implement land use and transportation policies to promote fewer vehicle miles traveled; and how to best facilitate educational outreach to promote energy efficiency and green technology.

Transportation: This element provides an analysis of the County's existing road network and assesses existing deficiencies and future needs in light of projected growth. The chapter offers strategies to maximize the efficiency of the county's road network while promoting policies and alternative transportation choices to reduce dependency on automobile transportation.

Community Facilities: This element analyzes existing and future needs for water supply, waste water treatment; solid waste collection and disposal, fire protection, emergency medical services, general government facilities, education facilities, parks, and libraries. For each of these community facilities, this chapter provides an assessment of existing conditions, projects future needs based on projected population growth, and provides recommendations on how to implement and fund these recommendations.

Priority Investment: This element ties the capital improvement needs identified in other elements to forecasted revenues for the next ten years. It is, in essence, a ten-year Capital Improvements Plan that is meant to guide the County's five-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and annual budgeting processes.